

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EUR-12 CU-02
AID-05 MCT-01 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 SIL-01 LAB-04
PC-01 IO-13 ACDA-07 /117 W
-----101508Z 018214 /46

P R 101230Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2138
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 4740

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS PINT SHUM BR
SUBJECT: SANCTIONS AGAINST LEFT WING OPPOSITIONISTS BELIEVED IMM-
INENT
REF: A. BRASILIA 3781 B. BRASILIA 4567

1. SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSIONAL
LEADERS AND TO PRESS REPORTS BASED ON MILITARY OR SECURITY
FORCE SOURCES, THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO TAKE STRONG PUNITIVE
MEASURES, SUCH AS CASSATIONS, IN NEXT FEW DAYS AGAINST
SOME LEFT WING MDB LEGISLATORS CONSIDERED SUBVERSIVE.
IN WHAT IS SEEN AS A COUNTEROFFENSIVE AGAINST THE
STRONG ANTI-GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN WAGED BY THE MDB SINCE THE
MID-APRIL POLITICAL REFORMS, THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO RUMORED
TO BE PLANNING FURTHER, MORE GENERAL POLITICAL RESTRICTIONS,
SUCH AS PRESS CENSORSHIP. MOST IMMEDIATE TARGET
OF THE SANCTIONS IS MDB CONGRESSMAN MARCOS TITO,
CHARGED WITH USING COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA IN A SPEECH IN THE
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES MAY 24. END SUMMARY.

2. TWO LEGISLATIVE LEADERS WHOSE STATEMENTS GENERALLY REFLECT
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THINKING OF MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT,
CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES MAJORITY LEADER JOSE BONIFACIO AND
DEPUTY SINVAL BOAVENTURA, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE CHAMBER OF
DEPUTIES COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, HAVE MADE STATEMENTS
DURING PAST WEEK PREDICTING STRONG GOVERNMENT ACTIONS IN NEXT
FEW DAYS AGAINST "SUBVERSIVES" WITHIN THE OPPOSITION. CLAIMING
THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE ATTEMPTING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT,

BOAVENTURA SAID THE "REVOLUTION IS GOING TO PUT A HALT TO SUBVERSION AND WILL APPLY REVOLUTIONARY REMEDIES IN ALL SECTORS-- CONGRESS, THE JUDICIARY, THE EXECUTIVE AND THE CHURCH."

3. BONIFACIO PREDICTED JUNE 5 THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO PUNISH THE MDB AND THE COMMUNISTS" WHO ARE STIMULATING STRIKES AND DISORDERS." HE ADDED THAT "BY THE END OF THIS WEEK AI-5 WILL BE USED AND THE PRESENCE OF MRS. CARTER IN BRAZIL WILL NOT AFFECT AT ALL THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO PUNISH." BONIFACIO SAW AS "DEFINITE" THE CASSATIONS OF MDB DEPUTIES MARCOS TITO, AIRTON SOARES, JOAL GILBERTO AND SANTILLI SOBRINHO. (TITO WAS DENOUNCED ON MAY 26 ON THE FLOOR OF THE CHAMBER BY SINVAL BOAVENTURA,

WHO PRESENTED PROOF, REPORTEDLY PROVIDED BY ARMY INTELLIGENCE, THAT SPEECH TITO HAD GIVEN IN CHAMBER TWO DAYS EARLIER WAS A HORTATORY EDITORIAL TAKEN FROM THE COMMUNIST PUBLICATION "VOZ OPERARIA." TITO HAS CLAIMED IGNORANCE OF THE ORIGIN OF THE MATERIAL HE PRESENTED, CLAIMING IT WAS PROVIDED BY AN ADVISOR. SOARES, GILBERTO AND SANTILLI ARE THREE DEPUTIES FROM THE MDB'S CAUCUS' YOUNGER LEFT WING WHO WERE IDENTIFIED BY THE SECURITY FORCES AS HAVING VISITED THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRASILIA ON JUNE 1 AND MET WITH STRIKING STUDENTS (REFTEL B)

4. IN ADDITION TO BONIFACIO'S AND BOAVENTURA'S PREDEICTIONS, THE PRESS DURING PAST WEEK HAS PUBLISHED SEVERAL REPORTS, ATTRIBUTED TO SOURCES CLOSE TO PLANALTO OR TO THE MILITARY TO THE EFFECT THAT TITO, SOARES, SANTILLI AND GILBERTO WOULD BE CASSATED AS STEP IN GOVERNMENT'S TOUGH RESPONSE TO WHAT IT CLAIMS TO BE GROWING CAMPAIGN OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION. (BONIFACIO, HIMSELF, IN A SUB-CONFIDENTIAL

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SEQUENT CLARIFICATION DENIED THAT HE HAD SPECIFICALLY PREDICATED THAT MDB DEPUTIES WOULD BE CASSATED, SINCE OTHER FORMS OF PUNISHMENT WERE POSSIBLE, SUCH AS COURT ACTION OR SANCTIONS VOTED BY CONGRESS ITSELF, PRESS REPORTS HAVE ALSO SPECULATED ON THE ADOPTION OF TIGHTER PRESS CENSORSHIP, CANCELLATION OF THE 1978 ELECTIONS, OR EVEN ABOLITION OF THE MDB. THE POSSIBILITY OF SANCTIONS BY CONGRESS, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVELY RULED OUT BY THE JUNE 8 REFUSAL BY CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES PRESIDENT MARCO MACIEL OF MARCOS TITO'S OWN REQUEST FOR A CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO CONSIDER THE CASE AGAINST HIM.

5. ON JUNE 8 THE PRESS REPORTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION AGAINST MARCOS TITO, AND POSSIBLY AGAINST OTHER OFFENDING MDB LEGISLATORS, COULD BE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 4740

TAKEN AS EARLY AS JUNE 10. COMMON SPECULATION IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS DELAYED ITS PLANNED PUNITIVE MEASURES UNTIL MRS. CARTER IS NO LONGER IN BRAZIL. RUMORS ARE ABUNDANT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY THAT GOVERNMENT WILL USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CASSATE A NUMBER OF OTHER TROUBLESOME MDB LEGISLATORS, INCLUDING SUCH AS SENATOR PAULO BROSSARD, WHO HAS MADE A SERIES OF VITRIOLIC SPEECHES DURING THE PAST MONTH ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS APRIL POLITICAL REFORMS, AND SENATOR ORESTES QUERCIA, PRPULAR MDB SENATOR FROM SAO PAULO, WHO HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION.

6. COMMENT. ATTACKS ON MDB LEFT BY CONSERVATIVE LEGISLATIVE LEADERS ARE INTERPRETED HERE AS PART OF A GOVERNMENT COUNTER OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE OPPOSITION ONSLAUGHT THAT BEGAN FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT'S RIGGED POLITICAL REFORMS IN MID-APRIL (REFTEL A). THE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST MARCOS TITO ARE REPORTEDLY BASED ON INFORMATION PROVIDED TO BOAVENTURA BY THE ARMY INTELLIGENCE CENTER (WHICH IS UNDER THE DIRECT COMMAND OF ARMY MINISTER FROTA RHATHER THAN SNI CHIEF FIGUEREIDO). THE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE PAST MONTH, ACCOMPANIED BY THE INCREASINGLY STRIDENT ANTI-GOVERNMENT RHETORIC OF MDB, HAS ALARMED
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THE SECURITY FORCES AND ENCOURAGED THEM TO SEEK A TOUGHER LINE AGAINST OPEN DEFIANCE OF THE REGIME. BY PLAYING UP THE ALLEGATION OF MARXIST LINKAGES OF THE MDB LEFT, THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPLOITING THE INHERENT IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE

PARTY TO ISOLATE THE MINORITY LEFT WING AND TO REDUCE THE PARTY'S CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE CRITICISM. BY INSISTING THAT THE MDB IS COMMUNIST-INFLUENCED, THE REGIME ALSO HELPS VALIDATE ITS OWN ARGUMENT THAT THE MDB CANNOT BE TRUSTED WITH A SHARE OF POWER. EVEN IF NO PUNITIVE ACTION IS TAKEN, THE THREATS AND DIRE PREDICTIONS HAVE THE EFFECT OF INTIMIDATING THE OPPOSITION AND ENCOURAGING THE MDB MODERATES TO BRING THE LEFT INTO LINE.

7. THIS COUNTEROFFENSIVE, COMBINED WITH THE CONTINUED STUDENT UNREST AROUND THE COUNTRY, HAS CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION AND FOREBODING SIMILAR TO THAT OF LATE MARCH FOLLOWING THE MDB'S REJECTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S JUDICIAL REFORM AMENDMENTS. AS NOW, THERE WERE FREQUENT RUMORS THEN --MANY OF WHICH PROVED UNFOUNDED -- OF MASS CASSATIONS OF OPPOSITION LEGISLATORS AND FURTHER CURBS ON PRESS FREEDOM.

8. GEISEL, WE SUSPECT, SHARES TO SOME EXTENT THE CONCERN OF THE SECURITY FORCES OVER THE SITUATION AND, MINDFUL OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING HIS AUTHORITY TO INFLUENCE THE SELECTION PROCESS, IS INCLINED TO ACT ON IT. AT THE SAME TIME, HE FACES SAME DILEMMA AS IN LATE MARCH OF PRESERVING TRAPPINGS OF DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM AND SOME VESTIGE OF HIS OWN LIBERALIZING MEASURES, SUCH AS GREATER PRESS FREEDOM AND TOLERANCE OF RELATIVELY FREE DEBATE IN CONGRESS. REFLECTING THIS CONCERN WERE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS DURING PAST FEW DAYS TO AREANA LEADER FRANCELINO PERREIRA AND TO BRAZILIAN NEWSMAN GIVEING ASSURANCES THAT BRAZIL WAS NOT HEADED FOR DICTATORSHIP AND THAT 1978 ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD AS PLANNED.

9. WHILE CONGRESSIONAL SANCTIONS AGAINST MDB OFFENDERS WOULD HAVE GIVEN GOVERNMENT EASY WAY OUT, INDICATIONS ARE THAT MACIEL TURNED DOWN PROPOSED COMMISSION OF INQUIRY BECAUSE HE RECOGNIZED LIMITED CONFIDENTIAL

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CHANCE THAT MAJORITY OF CONGRESS WOULD ULTIMATELY AGREE TO PUNISH TITO, AND BECAUSE INQUIRY ITSELF WOULD EFFECTIVELY BE USED TO POINT OUT UNORTHODOXY OF MANY STATEMENTS MADE IN CONGRESS, EVEN AMONG ARENA LEGISLATORS.

10. WITH ACTION EXPECTED IN NEAR FUTURE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT EXTENT, NATURE OR SEVERITY OF GOVERNMENT SANCTIONS. RUMORS OF MASS CASSATIONS, CANCELLATION OF 1978 ELECTIONS OR ABOLITION OF THE MDB SEEM EXTREME. BUT WE CONSIDER IT MORE LIKELY THAT AT VERY LEAST MARCOS TITO WILL BE PUNISHED IN SOME WAY. THE SYSTEM HAS LONG SUSPECTED HIM AS A PCB ACTIVIST AND HIS SPEECH IN CONGRESS IS VIEWED AS AN UNACCEPTABLE VIOLATION OF THE BASIC ETHOS OF THE REVOLUTION. CRIMMINS

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Message Attributes

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